

Google's self-driving car now races on rooftops (w/ Video)

March 7 2011, by Lin Edwards



(PhysOrg.com) -- Google has demonstrated its self-driving Toyota Prius racing around a rooftop parking lot at the Technology Entertainment Design (TED) conference held from February 28 to March 4 in Long Beach California.

Google Inc. has been engaged in testing autonomous cars for some time, both in controlled conditions such as last week's demonstration and out on the road, with each car driving at least 225,300 km (140,000 miles) without mishap, as reported in an earlier [PhysOrg](#) article.

At last week's conference attendees were given a short talk by Sebastian Thrun, a software engineer with Google, and then were allowed to travel

inside the car as it raced around a closed course on a nearby rooftop parking lot.

In the demonstration the car had been programmed to travel fast, screeching around the tight corners to demonstrate that it can be programmed to drive around a course aggressively.

Thrun, who said he decided to research ways of making roads safer after a childhood friend was killed by a car, also showed the conference attendees a video of their cars out on the open road in California, driving autonomously in normal traffic conditions, even avoiding obstacles such as a deer that wandered out in front of one of the cars, and navigating tight curves on a hillside road. In these conditions Thrun said the car is always driven conservatively and there is always a human in the driving seat as backup.

On the open road the destination is programmed as with a GPS and the car navigates along the route. In this way self-driven cars have driven automatically from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

[Google](#) is not the only company experimenting with driverless cars, such as the Made in Germany (MIG) car covered in [PhysOrg last year](#) and the [SARTRE car platoon](#) in Europe.

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Citation: Google's self-driving car now races on rooftops (w/ Video) (2011, March 7) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-google-self-driving-car-rooftops-video.html>

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